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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 003689

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DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP, INL, DRL, NEA/RA, AND NEA/ARP

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [ELAB](#) [UN](#) [AE](#)
SUBJECT: UAE PREPARING FOR TRAFFICKING-IN-PERSONS
CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL SCALE

REF: A) ABU DHABI 3616 (G/TIP visit)
B) ABU DHABI 3125 (ECSSR conference proposal)

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Classified by Ambassador Michele Sison, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Abu Dhabi's plan to host a worldwide conference on trafficking in persons (TIP) has moved forward since the July conversation noted ref B with Director General of the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR) Dr. Jamal Al-Suwaidi. Following coordination with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna, and with participation from G/TIP, ECSSR hosted a Steering Committee meeting in Abu Dhabi on September 4 to advance planning for a March 26-28 conference, the basic parameters of which envision participation by as many UN member nations as possible.

¶2. (C) Post had prefaced the September 4 Steering Committee meeting with caution to the organizers regarding the TIP record of the UAE, recommending progress towards passage of a TIP law, signature of the related UN Protocol, and possible establishment of shelters for trafficking victims as indications of the "credibility" of the host of such a conference. Signing the UN Protocol would seem particularly critical to a nation hosting a UN-based conference on the issue. The ECSSR Director General said at the outset of the September 4 session, however, that his organization was focused on "the conference," and represented neither the UAE nor international TIP expertise. As such, he arranged meetings with the UAE Ministers of Justice and Interior for the visiting experts to discuss UAE positions directly (conversations reported ref A).

¶3. (SBU) Organizers in Abu Dhabi were adamant in the September 4 planning meeting that the goal of the conference is a unified stand against trafficking in persons agreed to by "all 192 members of the UN," ideally represented at the ministerial level in Abu Dhabi. They cited the goal of a strongly-worded "Abu Dhabi declaration" to bolster international resolve and distributed a draft text (extensively edited since the draft noted ref B).

¶4. (C) Notable attendees at the meeting -- notable as experts in the field of trafficking in persons invited to lend substance to the conference -- included G/TIP Mark Taylor and UNODC Chief of anti-trafficking Kristina Kangaspunta, both of whom interjected caution as to the grand ambitions of a "global" conference which sought to produce a formal document agreed to by all parties. G/TIP cited the

merits of a more tightly focused regional gathering, while UNODC noted the inherent logistics and protocol issues raised by an event of this magnitude. After some discussion, organizers agreed that verbal acclamation of an "Abu Dhabi declaration" would be preferable to an effort to gain signatures on the document, but showed no flexibility on the question of keeping the conference global in scope by inviting "all 192" countries to participate. Being the substantive experts, G/TIP and UNODC were offered the opportunity to submit comments on the nature of invitees, a substantive agenda for the conference, and ideas for further redrafts of the declaration.

15. (C) USG participants on September 4 made clear to the organizers that U.S. interests in the event would largely be defined by the U.S. perception of the practical benefits to accrue from the conference in the TIP arena. As such, we could not commit to securing attendance of all UN member states (that would be the organizers job), but would endeavor to encourage those we deemed appropriate to attend. Similarly, the USG offered to help refine the invitee list (government and NGO) to focus on participation by key experts and agreed to share comments on a substantive agenda and declaration.

16. (SBU) Comment: In spite of the logistics challenge posed by an undertaking of this magnitude, ECSSR appears committed (and commissioned by Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed) to make the conference a success. It has reserved the prestigious Emirates Palace Hotel for the duration of the March 26-28 event and will reportedly block rooms in other hotels to accommodate the 1,000 or more participants. With UAEG backing, ECSSR appears committed to covering lodging and ground transportation costs for attendees. (ECSSR is not, however, prepared at this time to cover the air transportation costs of participants other than the conference speakers; instead ECSSR hopes to enlist the help

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of unspecified donors to assist in funding the air travel of resource-challenged participants.) It is also engaging the services of an international public relations firm to advertise the event and ensure broad media coverage. If successful, these efforts will underpin a conference for which Abu Dhabi seeks recognition as a capable host.

17. (C) Comment continued: The substance of the issue under discussion, however, is quite a separate matter. The primary focus of the organizers has been on staging a successful event in Abu Dhabi; the actual substance of the event appears secondary. As "experts" on TIP are only now asked to engage in drafting a meaningful agenda, G/TIP and UNODC have a basically clean slate on which to build a productive event -- although somewhat inhibited by the requirement of global participation and the nebulous title assigned to the conference: "Promoting Holistic Policies Against Trafficking in Persons." It is too early to tell how welcome USG input will be as the organizers move forward, but it is clear that a meaningful agenda would benefit from a regional focus (possibly in break-out sessions) and a final declaration more firmly grounded in the 2000 UN Protocol. If the UAE remains committed to the success of this event and recognizes the need to enhance its own record on TIP in order to appear a more credible host, the USG has an opportunity to leverage that commitment towards real progress on G/TIP's action plan for the UAE including the establishment of a victim's shelter and the passing of anti-TIP legislation. End comment.

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